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In memoriam

George Madison Bodge

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IN MEMORIAM

CHARLES LORING JOSLIN

A SERMON

IN MEMORIAM

CHARLES LORING JOSLIN

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN LEOMINSTER, SUNDAY, JANUARY 8TH, 1898,
BY THE PASTOR,

REV. GEORGE M. BODGE.

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C. L. Joslin

ADDITIONS.

On page 6, line 25, for blank read Wilder.

“ “ 6, “ 26, “ “ Carter.

Ancestral and Biographical Sketch OF CHARLES LORING JOSLIN.

Thomas Joslin aged 43, the emigrant ancestor, came from London, in the ship "Increase," Robert Lea, Master, embarking April 17, 1635. He was accompanied by his wife Rebecca aged 43, Children: Rebecca, 18, Dorothy 11, Nathaniel 8, Elizabeth 6, Mary 1. The eldest son Abraham, was not a passenger on the Increase, but joined the family soon after their arrival in this country. Thomas was among the proprietors of the town of Hingham in the year 1637 and was settled there. He was among the grantees of Sudbury in 1640. In 1654 he, and his son Nathaniel, signed the Town Covenant in Lancaster; and he died in that town, January 3d, 1660. His will made his wife Rebecca executrix and mentions sons Abraham, Nathaniel, grandson Nathaniel, and daughters Rebecca, wife of Thomas Nichols, Elizabeth wife of Edward Yeomans, Mary wife of Roger Sumner. Abraham Joslin remained at Hingham, where by his wife Beatrice he had several children, but he removed to Lancaster before 1663 and had born there Joseph 1663 and Mary 1666. Abraham died in 1670. His son Abraham with his family, February 10th, 1676, in the Indian attack upon Lancaster, took refuge in the Rowlandson house, which was set on fire by the Indians; when the wretched inmates were driven out by the flames the Indians killed the men, except one, and took the women and children captive. His wife Ann and daughter Beatrice were killed in captivity, being unable to keep up with the retreat. His younger brother Joseph was among the captives, and was rescued by some friendly Indians and brought to Norwich, Conn., the next May, and sent back by way of Boston to his friends. Nathaniel Joslin, the second son of Thomas and Rebecca was born in England in 1627; settled in Lancaster in 1654 married Sarah King, daughter of Thomas, of Marlborough. Children, born at Lancaster, who, according to his will, probated March 3d, 1694-

5, were Nathaniel, Peter, Sarah, Dorothy, Elizabeth, Rebecca and Martha. Nathaniel, the father, died at Marlborough April 3d, 1694. At the time of the destruction of Lancaster, Feb'y 10, 1675-6 he, with his family, took refuge in one of the block-houses which the enemy did not succeed in destroying, and with the rest of the inhabitants, except those in the Rowlandson house, they were rescued by Capt. Wadsworth with his soldiers from Marlborough garrison. He settled thereafter in Marlborough, as did his son Nathaniel. Peter Joslin, son of Nathaniel and Sarah (King) Joslin, was born in Lancaster February 22, 1665-6. He was brought up at Marlborough where his father settled after the destruction of Lancaster 1675-6. He married Sarah How, probably of Marlborough, and they had children, born at Lancaster, Peter, 1686, and three others born between that and 1692 July 18th, when in his absence, at work in his field, his family, together with widow Hannah Whitcomb, living with them, were killed by the Indians, with the exception of his son Peter who with his wife's sister, Elizabeth How, was taken captive. The woman afterwards returned, while the boy was killed in captivity. He married a second wife, who it is said was also killed with an infant child in a subsequent raid of the Indians. By reliable tradition we learn that Peter Joslin married afterwards a third, and even a fourth wife by whom he had John, the ancestor of the Leominster family. Peter Joslin was one of the proprietors of the "New Grant" now Leominster, and this son John settled upon his right, and Peter came to live with him late in life, and died at his son's house, April 8, 1759 aged 94 years.

John Joslin married Lucy —, and had, Lucy, born May 6, 1734, John born Sept. 17, 1735, who married Susannah —, and had Elias born April 29, 1765, married Prudence Lincoln, August 23, 1787. They had a son Elias born November 10, 1795, who married Elizabeth Stearns, April 11, 1819. Their children were William S. Jan. 22, 1820, Charles Loring born January 12, 1823, John E. Aug. 1, 1825, Francis L. January 1st, 1828, Mary E. May 16, 1830, George W. March 9, 1832, James T. June 23, 1834, Martha A. Feb. 13, 1837, George C. Aug. 19, 1839, Ellen L. July 16, 1842. The Joslin family has had an active and honorable part in the history of Leominster, in military, civil and educational affairs. Capt. John Joslin Jr. led the company which marched to Bennington in 1777, at Burgoyne's invasion, and was engaged in the battle, in which his younger brother Thomas was killed. Three others of the family, Peter, David and John served in the Revolution. Col. Geo. C. Joslin sustained the military credit of the name in the late War of the Rebellion.

CHARLES LORING JOSLIN, was born in Leominster, January 12, 1823, and was educated in the public school of his native town. At 16 years he was apprenticed to learn the business of comb-making, and started in business for himself about 1844 with Dana Graham as partner. In 1846 they bought a tract of land on Central street adjoining the river, built a dam and mill. Two years later the business was sold to Mr. Dana, and Mr. Joslin

built another mill on Union street, and began again with his brother-in-law Mr. E. G. Adams, and this firm continued a successful business, with several moves to larger quarters until 1870-1. In 1871 a new mill was built on Water Street and an increasing and successful business was carried on under the firm name of Joslin, Palmer & Williams, for five years, when Mr. Palmer retired. The remaining partners carried on the business, until 1883 when Mr. Joslin retired from active business.

Mr. Joslin has always taken an active interest in public matters and has served the town most acceptably in many places of honor and trust. He was frequently elected moderator of the annual and other town meetings, was for several years a member of the Board of Selectmen, and in 1869 represented the town in the State Legislature. In all these places Mr. Joslin deserved and received the unqualified approval of his fellow citizens. His service was alike honorable to himself and beneficial to the town.

With the financial affairs of the town Mr. Joslin has been closely identified. He was a director of the First National Bank from its organization in 1864 until its charter expired twenty years later. He held the same position in the Leominster National Bank at the time of his death. He was for a long time closely connected with the Leominster Savings Bank and at the time of his death was the President. He was, also, President of the Leominster Gas Light Co. In all these positions Mr. Joslin was held to be and was a safe and wise counsellor. Few men had larger influence than he or used it more constantly for the best and highest interests of the individual and the community.

In October, 1846, Mr. Joslin married Miss Martha J. Adams of Townsend, who survives him. The four children of this union are all living—Martha D., now Mrs. W. A. England; Clara A., now Mrs. J. W. Wetherbee; Mary E., and Charles A., who since 1884 has filled with eminent ability, the position of Town Clerk and Treasurer.

It thus appears that Mr. Joslin has contributed most effectually to all that is most desirable in the life of Leominster. He will always be a most honorable part of our history. For more than forty years he was a potential power in the industrial life of the town, conducting his business with strict honesty and success. Of all this the testimony is not only abundant but universal. No incident in his business life gives stronger evidence of his sterling integrity than this, that when at one time, on account of reverses in business, he was forced to compromise with his creditors, he informed them that if ever able, he should pay in full. He was able and he *did pay* not only principal but interest to the last cent. Let it stand here as an especial honor to his name and memory.

In public position and private life, in social intercourse and public speech Mr. Joslin so conducted himself as to honor his citizenship and his manhood. He was esteemed, trusted and honored by his fellow citizens, while the purity and strength of his home life none can doubt. In referring to those men

who have best conserved the true interests of this beautiful town, Charles Loring Joslin must be named among the first.

Mr. Joslin had been in feeble health for several months, but until within a short time was about upon the street. He did not suffer great physical pain at all, and at last passed very peacefully away about 10 o'clock A. M. on Monday, January 2, 1893.

The funeral was attended at the house on Wednesday, conducted by Rev. George M. Bodge, pastor of the Unitarian church, with which church and society Mr. Joslin was long and honorably connected. The burial service of the I. O. O. F. formed, by request of Mr. Joslin, a part of the service.

IN MEMORIAM. CHARLES LORING JOSLIN.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN LEOMIN-
STER, SUNDAY, JANUARY 8TH, 1893, BY THE PASTOR,
REV. GEORGE M. BODGE.

[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE PARISH.]

“TO GIVE UNTO THEM BEAUTY FOR ASHES.” ISAIAH LXI. 3.

While this sermon is meant as a memorial prepared for this occasion, I have no thought of giving a biography or pronouncing a eulogy upon the name of our dear friend and brother who has passed to the higher realm, we believe; but only in justice to ourselves as a society in which he has always borne a helpful part, and to the community in which he has lived, to pay this humble tribute to his memory and seek to draw some profitable lessons from his good and useful life.

For, in the midst of the rush of life towards the goal of pleasure or ease, with the shadow of bitter poverty haunting its way, step by step; with idle drifting by many, and its opposite, the feverish press of others into the whirlpool of speculation in the mad race for wealth and fame, it is well to pause and reflect upon the power and peace attainable in a good life, passing through the shine and shadow of expe-

rience. To one who lives only in the present, and for the present, his wonder at the words, will naturally form itself into question ; "Beauty for Ashes?" What beauty then may come from ashes, the symbol of destruction, the sign of humiliation, the emblem of death? Ashes are dead, and belong in the realm of the dead ; while beauty is alive, and glowing with its life. Ashes are of the past and its smouldering ruins. Beauty is of the living present, and facing the brightness of the future ! Such are the hasty conclusions of the un-thinking. And I apprehend that many of us are living so entirely in and for the present, that few stop to consider carefully just what part of life is ashes, and what part beauty, till near the end of the course, when the truth is seen mostly down the vista of memory, and often through the mist of regretful tears. Many, eager to know all that may be known of the pleasures of this world, try again and again, and taste the "Dead Sea fruit," not heeding that again and again its delusive beauty turns to ashes on their lips. How many indeed there are, who eagerly follow the same vain lure which may have thrice deceived them, like mad players, who, as hope grows less, make the stakes larger, in desperation ; until at last they stand grasping only the ashes of unavailing remorse for their wasted power ; and saying bitterly, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And all because they have jostled their way through the real joys and pleasures of life, pursuing the phantom of seeming beauty which lures the selfish nature, but only mocks pursuit at the end, with the ashes of its unreality. How many there have been, who, in the flush of youth and health, have lavishly squandered both these in the vain race after the forever fleeing phantom of pleasure. I recall such an one, who, thirty years ago seemed to me to possess everything that could make life joyous and good. Rich and talented, filled with healthful energy ; free to act in any direction of his wish ; kind hearted and true hearted then ; popular withal.

In an evil hour he fell in with some gay associates who gave him

their motto "Live while you live, and die when you must," illustrating their meaning by showing him the way into their excesses of vice. All too soon after the first plunge into the vortex, the pupil outdid his teachers; the quiet country village no longer served his career. "The home people were too slow, they didn't know what life was!" And so to the city he went in his mad course, and no warnings, or prayers, or tears, of family or friends could reclaim him. The gray hairs of his parents went down to the grave in sorrow, and the growing contempt of friends, forced by his excesses, drove him to lower and lower levels towards ruin, which he found full soon. After dragging an honored name and a splendid fortune through every form of degradation, he was stranded years ago, where he now lies in the midst of the ashes of his past life, a poor wreck,—a pitiful, palsied, prematurely old man; beggared of all the possible beauty which lay within the scope of his young manhood's opportunity; rest of wealth, and friends, and all the powers of body and mind, save the partial power to reflect upon his ill spent life, and so much of speech as to murmur his complaint that "life is not worth living," or to echo the old misleading cry "vanity of vanities. all is vanity." A cry that would plunge the brightest hopes of human life under the ashes of its own despair; a common cry of souls who have bartered all the possible beauty of life for ashes so void and dead that no beauty can ever spring from their midst.

There are thousands of such tragedies in common life, being played out to their bitter end in the years we are passing, some less and some more woeful than this, grading all the way from the simply idle and selfish life, to that which steeps itself in crime; while each in its degree forfeits the promise of the prophet, not gaining beauty for ashes, but only dry ashes for the wasted beauty of life. I understand that, in the painting of a picture, the skilful use of contrasts, in color and grouping, is an important element of success.

And so, when a strong, true, and devoted manly life, stands forth in common experience, as against this shadowy background of folly, weakness and wicked waste, and showing forth the noble contrasts, we all gain a new power of faith in human life, and a fresh confidence in the possible beauty and glory of manhood.

And this lesson all may well learn and heed. There are few who would not wish, who really do not mean to serve the light instead of the shadow in the picture of which their life is to be a part. I do not believe there are many who at first deliberately and willingly "choose darkness rather than light."

By far the most, set out upon their course doubtless with the old poet's idea that "happiness is our being's end and aim." And the choice of direction comes, when each one gives his meaning to "happiness." Whoever means by it, the deep and true and permanent principle in the soul, which makes for the sweeter and holier modes of present living, and lives that meaning into his day, will find and know and reveal, that which is not only the real happiness, but the true beauty of human life.

But if by happiness is meant pleasure, the gratification of fancy or taste or pride as such, then, whoever seeks along these lower levels of motive, will never find the real happiness, but only the deceitful fruitage which shall at last crumble to ashes at the lips.

Human life has always been teaching, and human souls have always been learning this old lesson; and yet how strange it is that so few, comparatively, seem to realize the truth of it in the common ways of life! There are so many who still reckon success and failure by the amount of wealth or degree of power over men and things! So many who hold, and say, and sing, and love high sentiment, in theory; who in their every day ways and duties live all unconsciously, along a very low plane of sentiment. Even in the highest minds and lives we find evidence of this tendency. The poet, Tennyson, many years ago wrote out that gracious sentiment,

“ ‘Tis only noble to be good.”

While he pictured in his wonderful verse, the strong contrasts of the honest worth of the “Grand old Gardener and his Wife,” set over against the capricious and cruel “title nobility” of the DeVeres. It was a noble sentiment, and nobody questioned that he meant it, even when, a few years later he so gladly accepted the title Lord Tennyson from his queen. All the same we cannot help thinking that the great poet stooped from the high place where the world had throned his genius, to accept the bauble of an empty title; while if he had declined it with the gentle dignity born of high sentiment, this age and the great free future would have crowned him with a far nobler title; the title of a man who not only wrote but lived a noble poem.

But this is the “way of the world” we know, and has been the tendency for ages. The great names, those which have been glorified by the nations, have been the names of the great conquerors so-called, like Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon; all warriors of undoubted genius, but tyrants of the cruellest type. What numberless precious lives, far nobler and truer than either of these, were thrown away, just to gratify their mad ambition, can never be known. And again, the renowned men who have proclaimed great systems of Philosophy, have won glory and fame; while they who have manifested the true philosophy, in their daily thought, and word, and work, have passed to their rest, unknown, by the world. Those who have written great poems, have had their brows wreathed with the Laurel of fame, while those who have lived great poems, have, many times over been crowned with thorns. And yet I do believe that the true poetry of life, the poetry which is lived out, does no find its closing stanza in this world, but goes forward forever, set to diviner music than this world affords; on and up toward the ultimate beauty, while the transient earth-fame and name, alike with the mouldering manuscripts, fade away into lifeless ashes.

What then is there for us in these great lights and shades of history; these puzzling contrasts of experience? What, that is of value, in the names or deeds of the great warriors, save as we may turn the currents of their genius and ambition into new and truer channels of endeavor in our own lives? What in Philosophy, save as it may enable us to discern more clearly the deeper truths of man's relations to God, and his fellow-men?

What in the poets and poetry of the world, save as they teach us to live more and more purely toward the standards of the higher life? What is there indeed in all history, but a waste of ashes, save for the immortal beauty of noble aspirations, and the undying love and truth which have been revealed and still live on in human hearts, from age to age, with larger purpose and nobler meaning?

Look out over all the landscape to-day, and mark how cold and sere and dead, now, is everything which a few short months back, was green and fresh and warm with life. Now, from horizon to horizon, the earth seems a wide mausoleum, with the white mantle of snow spread above the funeral ashes of the dead Summer. We remember something of that Summer. While it was yet a living one, we walked in its light and through its ways carpeted with green, bordered and spangled with the blue and gold and starry beauty of its flowers. We remember, because it was all a part of the poetry of the Summer. There was much dull prose in the same days doubtless; the sordid prose of root, and stem, and branch were the necessary means by which the promise which stirred below and within should climb to its fulfillment in bloom and fruitage. And above, there were clouds and shadows too, in that Summer, and long dark days of togs and rain, and gloom and threatening thunders. But out from the dark days came the power of refreshing, and from the gloom of the thunder cloud fell the blessing of the rain.

The Spring gave its promise; the Summer its bloom and beauty;

the Autumn, fruit and fulfilment; the Winter has spread over everything perishable, the ashes of death and decay.

And the year, with the strong contrasts of its poetry and prose, its lights and shades, its beauty and its ashes, may serve as the type of the onward course of a human life. Childhood and youth with their glad promise of Spring. Manhood with its development of grace and power in character, like the Summer's bloom and energy. Ripening age with its harvest sheaves of fulfilment, and fruits of noble work. And then the Winter ashes of death.

And especially is the image forceful and pleasant when we have before us the example of a true and good life; one which from infancy to age has been lived out bravely and well. An example of a New England boy, who, without special help or inheritance, without crowding others, without display or sensation, has, by his own endeavors, made himself a man, to be respected, remembered and beloved by the whole community. A boyhood spent upon the farm, in the midst of its exacting, but healthful duties, where so many of the best men of America have had their early training. Dividing his time between the work of the farm and short terms of the public school he grew through boyhood and youth. One of his schoolmasters, yet living, speaks of him as having carried out the promise of his early life, saying, "he was a good boy and has always been an excellent man." In his youth, according to the good old-time custom in well ordered large families, he was placed in training for some useful work, which afterwards became his business in life. With strict integrity, diligent attention, and hopeful courage, through long years of manly endeavor he achieved independence, and that result which is a human life's truest success, an honored name and a noble character.

His Spring and Summer and Autumn have passed, and yet, now that the ashes of his Winter lie with the leaves and flowers under their mantle of peaceful white, we do not think of his life as fin-

ished; but in some higher and freer way than ever before, going forward to fulfil its infinite purpose in God's infinite years. The bloom of Summer and the fruits of Autumn are far more than their ashes, how much more, God alone can know: but we know that to us the glad recollections of the pleasant days and scenes, abide in memory; and more than that, down under the earth, every little root, and germ, and seed, in every pulse, proclaims and prophesies the new beauty which shall spring to new life from the ashes of the old Summer, when the sun shall wheel again towards the new Summer. Shall the germ of the immortal soul be less potent than that of the flower? Or shall the Infinite love be less tender to it, when He gives "beauty for ashes, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?"

I will not, I cannot believe it. The longer I live the more fully I trust the word, "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal." The close of a good life, through all its regret and sorrow, is a gracious event. It is like the close of a bright day. Many of us perhaps noticed last Friday evening's sunset; how over all the West there was spread a broad sea of tender light, across which, here and there floated cloudlet-flecks of red and purple and gold; slowly the brightness faded away into the gray ashes of twilight, and there was left to us of its beauty, a precious memory, a dying day's benediction. And such benedictions are sacred, but how far more precious and sacred the sunset benedictions of a good and loving life!

I know there are many such benedictions coming back from the good lives lived out here in this community. There are many honored and saintly names in the annals of this church and society. Another is now added, than which few will be more honored. But your memories and hearts can best pronounce his eulogy; for his life as he has lived it out right here in your midst, is its own best eulogy. A good, and true, and upright man! That is the brief sen-

tence, but it means everything, it covers the whole scope; and upon whatever point of his character you may turn the light of memory, something of beauty, I doubt not, will spring to life from the ashes of your sorrow and regret. Kindness radiated from him as if born of his inner light, from the tender home affection for his own to the genial courtesy extended to the stranger. That kindness of heart was large enough to embrace even enemies, if he ever had any, and strong enough to disarm envy and malice with a word. Giving out constantly from his sympathy and kindly desire to help all in need or perplexity, there will be many beyond the limits of his home who will miss his wise and kindly advice, and ready hand of help.

In the relations of business, the impress of his honesty was stamped upon every transaction. In his home, as the haven of his highest enjoyment, he gave all its relations, as father, husband, friend, adviser, comforter, a high and holy meaning; loyal in all and to all with life's best loyalty, not blind to faults, but admonishing by example, and "speaking the truth in love." Many a one here doubtless, has, each his own treasured memory, some little touch of kindly interest, approval or sympathy; but we all have the heritage of the upright, faithful, and kindly life. And thus to-day "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed in this tribute paid to his memory. And not only here in our church and society and in the community where he has been honored as a citizen and as a trusted leader in public affairs, but in the wider circle of acquaintance throughout the State, his loss will be felt and his memory honored. In the great fraternity of which he has been a life long and loyal member, the observances of respect are not simply formal, but real and deep in sincere sorrow.

And finally, dear friends, is it not a gracious lesson for all of us who live on, that such large and loving homage is paid to the memory of a good man, a true man, and simply for his goodness and truth's sake?

"To give them beauty for ashes." Can we not see that immortal beauty must spring from the ashes of such a life. For every true life renews itself in the touch of its influence in home and friendship and the power of example everywhere. And so of him we may truly say, with a solemn and tender meaning "He rests from his labors and his works do follow him."

When honored and trusted friends are taken from us, we often call to mind more clearly and appreciate more fully the real worth and meaning of their characters, and often we gain our highest good from them by the lesson of their lives read and realized by our sorrow.

His honored life has not been without its struggles and temptations and losses; its strength and victory has been gained through endeavor. May the lesson of his life abide in ours, and especially in the lives of the young in whom his interest was so deep and true.

Dear friends, let us heed the lesson of this good life, and may its memory be in all a quickening inspiration, leading us to higher levels and into truer harmony with the divine life. While we sorrow for a friend gone from our number, and give our warmest sympathies to those in the home circle most deeply bereaved, we can but rejoice that God has revealed in this life, such loving, loyal faith and hope, and now in its passing away, gives so much of real beauty for the ashes of grief. And as we take up our own burdens and pass forward, God grant that it may be with a quickened zeal for the revealing of "the true, the beautiful and the good," in human life; having faith that such revelation does not cease in the life at death, but goes forward forever to where, throned in the light of a larger life, the Angel of love waits to bestow immortal beauty for the ashes of faded mortality. So may we all heed the lesson of this day, comforted by the older poet's promise of "Beauty for Ashes," and inspired with the modern poet's trustful word, that—

“ Nothing resting in its own completeness
Can have worth or beauty ! but alone,
Because it leads and tends to further sweetness
Fuller, higher, deeper than its own.

Spring's real glory dwells not in the meaning,
Gracious though it be, of her fair hours,
But is hidden in her tender learning
Towards the summer's richer wealth of flowers.

Life is only bright when it proceedeth
Towards a truer, deeper life above,
Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect love.

Learn the mystery of progression duly,
Do not call a glorious change, decay,
But know, we only hold our treasures truly,
When it seems as if they pass away.”

*Miss A. A. Proctor.

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